

Betty snatched her boob off the table and ran back to the kitchen. She leaned up against the refrigerator and laughed so hard that her feet slid out from under her on the greasy floor. She was sitting there gasping, wiping the tears from her eyes, and trying to regain her composure, when Bill, the cook, came up and asked her, "What the hell is that in your hand, Betty?"

She giggled and handed it over. He took a look, dropped it like it had burned him, and said, "MY GOD," as it bounced away and rolled under the grill.

Out front, the other waitresses huddled together around the coffee machine, horror stricken, talking among themselves about what a shameless old hussy this new girl Betty was.

#### WATCHIN' THE DOG

Clete and Juanita drove off to Vegas, leaving their dog in the care of the next door neighbors, Ruth and Ellis, and Ruth and Ellis were finding out that Ginger, three pounds of beetle-browed, stick-legged, high-stepping Chihuahua, would steal the food right out from under your nose if you weren't careful: a weiner had disappeared from Ellis' T.V. tray when he'd gotten up for a beer, Ruth had lost two-thirds of a jelly donut when she was paging through the T.V. guide, and one of two T-bones that had been laid out on a paper plate on the picnic table vanished when Ellis turned his back to light the briquettes.

The final straw was when Ruth caught the little pig up on the kitchen counter sniffing at the big sixteen-pound ham she had cooling on the cutting board.

She slunk into the kitchen on the dog's blind side and silently slid the meat cleaver from the utensil drawer. She brought it down with the intention of beheading the little glutton, but she missed. The cleaver smashed the cutting board and bounced the ham and Ginger into the air. The dog hit the ground scampering, going nowhere on the glossy, freshly waxed floor before she finally, and barely an inch in front of certain death, got some traction and flew.

Ruth gave chase, bending and bringing the cleaver down, divoting her shag rug, her front porch, her front lawn, and her driveway as Ginger zigged and zagged away from



each blow like she had radar. Ruth pulled up and skidded to a stop at the sight of Clete and Juanita's Ford Granada doing a tire-screeching, door-flinging stop at the curb. Ginger leaped into the cab and Juanita leaped out. "What the hell kind of a baby-sitter are you, anyway?" she said, advancing on Ruth with her fists balled up and her jaws clenched tight.

Ruth shook the cleaver under her neighbor's nose and said, "The kind who almost lost a week's worth of meat to that mangy little mutt of yours." Juanita sprang at her. Ruth swung the cleaver. Juanita caught her wrist and they clinched and wrestled, like two vicious, dancing, muu muu clad hippos, while Clete got the bags from the trunk and carried them inside and Ginger sneaked by them, heading back toward that ham.

## TUNA

The aroma of Juanita's tuna casserole wafted out the windows and the screen door, drawing every cat in a half-mile radius. They gathered on the front porch and back fence rails, caterwauling horribly.

Clete slipped out the sliding glass door with his pistol and started blasting away, blowing splintery holes in his fence.

The cats disappeared.

Juanita lifted her casserole from the oven and set it on a hot pad on the dining room table. She stuck a serving spoon in the middle of the steaming dish and left it to cool. It set and hardened like a bowl of concrete. When she tried to serve it, she couldn't get the spoon out, so she threw a frozen pizza in the oven and turned on the T.V.

Clete set the casserole bowl on a makeshift plywood pedestal in the front yard and challenged all comers to make an attempt at removing the spoon. The neighborhood men abandoned their weed whips and lawn mowers and lined up for their turns. They pulled and strained unsuccessfully, and the cats hung around the corners of the house and under the cars on the street and driveway, waiting.

Somebody asked what the prize was for the removal of the spoon. Clete opened a beer, took a long pull, wiped his mouth on his sleeve, and said, "A date with the chef."